



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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Vol. 24, No. 15  
July 23, 2010

by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

If you like it hot, then this has been your week. For the rest of us, a few degrees lower would be appreciated. The fishing reports represent the summer time mixed bag. We are receiving many calls from anglers looking to go offshore in search of dolphin and tuna, while inshore anglers have commenting on everything from croaker to cobia.

Numerous times in the overview, we have highlighted the Marine Sportfish Collection Project (MSCP) on page 7, promoting new partner locations, changes to the project, or tournaments benefiting the project. This week, we have two related items to mention. First off, on August 28, 2010, Kathy at Wallace's Bait and Tackle is planning the inaugural Back River Slam Fishing Tournament, which will focus on two specific species of interest to the MSCP, red drum and speckled trout, along with another angler favorite, flounder. The concept is that these three fish make up the grand slam of the Back River area, and the challenge is who can catch the best combination of the three, along with the biggest of each, during the tournament. This should prove to be an exciting event to be part of and we appreciate Kathy's efforts to promote events benefiting the project.

Also, ever since the Marine Sportfish Collection Project was initiated in 2007, anglers have expressed a great desire to donate flounder carcasses for a reward. However, the biological staff at VMRC has always managed to collect enough biological samples for flounder from other sources that there was never a need for more flounder sample. Only those recreational fish that staff is unable to sample in adequate amounts make the project lists. Starting this Saturday, July 24, that is about to change for a short time period. The Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) needs biological flounder data specifically from the recreational fishery. The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will be collecting those samples through this upcoming fall, 2010, in a partnership with VIMS. Inside each freezer, there will be two donation kits, one for the regular donations requested, and a special flounder only donation kit (look for the yellow sheet with white bag kits). Be sure to fill out all of the information requested and mark what reward item you want! See page 8 for more details!

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Wachapreague**

Staff at the Wachapreague Marina report that 20 dolphin, a few bluefin tuna, and the occasional yellowfin tuna were caught last week (a 31.2-pound dolphin was weighed in on the July 3.). Inshore, the flounder bite has slowed, but there are still keepers being caught.

At Captain Zed's, local anglers caught flounder last week. One citation was reported (7 pounds, 6 ounces) around Drawing Channel on July 20. Croaker were also in the area, and most were caught around Cedar Island Cove (north and east of the inlet). A few have also been found in the Green Channel (near the north end of the island).

### **Cape Charles**

Chris' Bait and Tackle reports that croaker fishing was doing well near Oyster and around the Concrete Ships at Kiptopeke this week. Sea mullet were found around Buoy 13 and Oyster with a few croaker mixed in. Flounder were hooked around Buoy 42, the High Rise, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Good catches of cobia were reported at Buoys 16, and spadefish were hooked around the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands.

Captain Ray Cardone, of Cherrystone, reported catches of sea mullet, croaker, and puffers this week. Small cobia were hooked as well, and Captain Ray reports seeing larger ones lurking around local waters.

### **Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel**

Staff at the Sunset Boating Center reported nice catches of flounder in the area. Headboats did really well last week with small croaker.

No citations were reported from Salt Ponds Marina last week. However, everyone seemed to find keepers at last weekend's flounder tournament, even if there weren't any whoppers. The tournament-winning fish was 6 pounds, 5 ounces.

Kathy, at Wallace's Marina, has seen a few more cobia coming in this week. She also reported keeper flounder at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, along with nice-sized spot and croaker catches. Spadefish were trickling in from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and speckled trout were reported from the river.

At the York River Fishing Center, staff reported that the croaker began getting bigger last week in the York River. As the temperatures heated up, so did the flounder fishing, especially around the York Spit Reef. Cobia were also caught this week around York Spit.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

Flounder fishing has been good in the Buoy 42/Cell area. Some large flounder were falling to live bait fished along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in the deeper areas. Back River Reef was also producing some nice flatfish. Cobia anglers just keep catching. Sight-casters were working the Baltimore Channel and along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Chummers caught fish at York Spit, the Inner Middle Grounds, Bluefish Rock, and near Buoy 18. Spanish mackerel were available along the coast and throughout the lower Bay. The waters from Back River Reef to York Spit have been productive lately. Small bluefish were everywhere, which made the Spanish a challenge. Larger croaker were available in the York River near the Coleman Bridge and near the Cell. Some nice sheepshead were being caught along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and a few were coming from Back River Reef. Spadefish were also caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Amberjack were thick at the Southern Towers. There were also some at the Chesapeake Light Tower and nearby wrecks. Offshore anglers were hampered by windy weather. When they got out, there were good catches of dolphin and billfish. A few bluefin were still being caught on the inshore hills along with some nice dolphin and king mackerel.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

It's hot! But the summer fishing trend along the mid-Atlantic is going strong. Luck paired with good weather could mean a promising weekend for anglers, with the main interest still centered on flounder and cobia.

Cobia action picked up a little this week. Both Latimer Shoals and the Nine Foot Shoals were producing for those anchored and chumming, while the Baltimore Channel area and the pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel were producing for top water casters. Some sight-casters were hooking up to a dozen fish in an outing. Many of these fish were beginning to group into pods as they collected at the mouth of the Bay.

With the water in the Bay clearing this week, the flounder action is picking up. Many folks reported modest catches but quality fish. Many flatfish ranging from 3 to 7 pounds were caught, with the best results coming from offering live bait along the bridge pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, especially north of the 4<sup>th</sup> island and along the High Rise area. The Cell also turned on this week, with anglers reporting limits of nice keepers. Both peanut bunker and small spot or croaker are good choices for bait. Rudee and Lynnhaven inlets had plenty of shorts to pick through, with a smattering of keepers mixed in.

Drum are still on the loose in the lower Bay, with red drum enthusiasts chasing large schools swimming on the surface along the Eastern Shore shoals lately. Pods of black drum are roaming the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, but the dirty water made it difficult to find the fish last week.

Spanish mackerel are still dominating the trolling scene along the oceanfront. The best catches are coming in 40 to 45 feet of water, about two to three miles off of Rudee Inlet. Quickly trolled small spoons on small planers will do the trick. Most of the fish are ranging from 16 to 21 inches, with a surplus of taylor bluefish in the mix. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) ranging up

to 23 inches were beginning to respond within Lynnhaven this week.

Croaker are everywhere from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The area off Kiptopeke State Park is also a favorite location lately, where nice sized sea mullet are also mixed in. Good catches of small hardheads are also still coming from the Small Boat Channel near the 1<sup>st</sup> island. Anglers heading to Oyster are finding good croaker action, with most fish in the medium size range, and a few larger fish are also starting to show. Spot are also biting along the oceanfront and the southern shores of the lower Bay, as well as near the Bay Bridge Tunnel. A few keeper-sized spot are also hitting within Lynnhaven Inlet.

Spadefish are still available at the Chesapeake Light Tower, the Tower Reef, nearshore and inshore wrecks, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Cell, and Plantation Light. The fish are biting well near the High Rise area, but most fish are still ranging around 3 pounds.

Some large sheepshead are taking bait around the Bay Bridge Tunnel structure this week. Both clam and fiddlers, dangled in range of these feisty fighters, are working well. Plenty of triggerfish are also biting at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, as well as on several inshore wrecks.

The folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle are reporting a few tarpon hook-ups and jump-offs on the Eastern Shore this week. A nice 51-inch silver king gave one angler a run for his money recently. The mighty fish was released after the angler skillfully subdued the fish on a fly rod. Deep-dropping is still a good choice, with decent blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, blackbelly rosefish, and nice grouper on the menu. Black sea bass are also available on many inshore wrecks and deepwater structures. Amberjack are still taking most any live bait offered on several offshore wrecks and at the South Tower. Take plenty of bait, and plan for a hot day.

Offshore, the billfish bite is still scattered. A few white marlin and a smattering of blues and sailfish are making things interesting near the Cigar recently. Some big dolphin are showing here and there, with surprise mako sharks still a possibility. School-sized bluefin tuna are still available on the inshore lumps, with king mackerel a possibility in these same areas.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Johnny, with Jetts' Hardware, reports that the Spanish mackerel still have not shown up in good numbers in their area. Bluefish are much more likely to bite than mackerel. Small spot and croaker were available to bottom fishermen, and some flounder were being caught in the usual places like the Potomac River jetties and the Light.

Dan, with Smith's Point Marina, reports the best fishing has been on the Maryland side of the line for striped bass. Lots of croaker were caught along with small spot. Flounder were hooked as well. The bluefish bite was still strong, but the Spanish mackerel were still mysteriously absent since the water temperature and salinity were right for people to start catching them.

Butch, with Garretts' Marina, reports there are 12- to 14-inch croaker being caught in the early mornings as people look to escape the daytime high air temperatures. There are still rumors of flounder

in the Rappahannock River.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Flounder cooperated for some anglers fishing in the Buoy 42 and Cell areas this week, and small spadefish were available at the Cell and at Wolftrap Light. The croaker bite is moving into the Bay, and spot were being caught off Gwynn's Island, Butlers Hole, and the Spike. Schools of small taylor bluefish were everywhere in open waters and could be trolled up at 3–5 knots. Spanish mackerel arrived and could be caught trolling Clark spoons or small Drone spoons at 6–8 knots in the vicinity of Windmill Point bar south to Wolftrap Light. Cobia continued to be caught around New Point Light and on York Spit. We weighed one caught near Buoy 42 on Friday. Shallow-water fishermen continued to catch a mixed bag of spot, croaker, sea mullet, and small flounder.

### **Virginia Beach**

Inshore anglers caught numerous bluefish and Spanish mackerel last week, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. They were also doing well with spadefish, cobia (a 45-pound cobia was brought in), and shark (blacktip). Nice amberjack were found a little further out. Offshore, bluefin and yellowfin tuna, dolphin, and mako shark were reported with scattered white and blue marlin.

Paula, at Fisherman's Wharf Marina, reported that there was a good white marlin bite last week near the Triple Os. Three white marlin and several gaffer dolphin were hooked.

### **Virginia Piers**

Spot and croaker were reported from staff at the Ocean View Pier, along with small flounder.

Staff at the Virginia Beach Pier reported that spot and roundhead have been caught recently, along with a few Spanish mackerel, bluefish, and the occasional flounder. Crabbing has been good as well.

Spot, a few roundhead, small croaker, and blue crabs were reported from the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier last week.

At the Buckroe Pier, anglers were catching a lot of nice spot, puffer, taylor bluefish (day and night), grey trout (night), and croaker last week. Cobia have been sighted but not hooked this week. Both the number and size of spot have really picked up over the past week.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head continued to produce limits of dolphin. Tuna have been continuing their good show with yellowfin, blackfin, and skipjack tuna. Wahoo and king mackerel were around but not in very good numbers. Bill fishermen saw most of their catches comprised of blue marlin with a few white marlin and sailfish in the mix. Bottom-droppers caught blueline tilefish, grouper (snowy, gag, and yellowedge), vermilion snapper, red snapper, sea bass, and triggerfish. Eight to ten miles offshore, anglers hooked striped bass, red drum, and cobia. Near shore, surf and pier fishermen had good luck with Spanish mackerel and bluefish, but the runs could be brief. Bottom fishermen in the nearshore zone were catching spot, croaker, pompano, puffers, sea mullet, and rays. In the sounds and

inlet, numerous flounder were being caught, but a large number of them were throwbacks. Speckled trout could be caught around the Washington Baum Bridge and Melvin Daniels Bridge but only in the early morning and late evening. Sheepshead, spadefish, and black drum were around the Oregon Inlet Bridge.

South of Oregon Inlet, the surf fishing has been good with spot, croaker, and sea mullet being caught in copious quantities. Ramps 43 and 44 were hotspots for the sea mullet, but you better have fresh bloodworms on your hooks. Avon had bluefish and sea mullet in the area. The National Park Service has opened up a corridor on the beach, east of Ramp 44, to ORV traffic for people to access the Point. People making that trek found bluefish and puppy drum (juvenile red drum).

For those offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet, dolphin were being caught along with blackfin tuna, a few wahoo, amberjack, and a lone sailfish. Inside the inlet, speckled trout, grey trout, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel were caught.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.











# THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,*

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**

**The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:**

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM	TAUTOG
				
KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN)	WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPER, WARSAW GROUPER	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
				

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)  
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)  
Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)**



**The Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
And**



**The Virginia Institute of Marine Science**

***WANT YOUR FLOUNDER....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

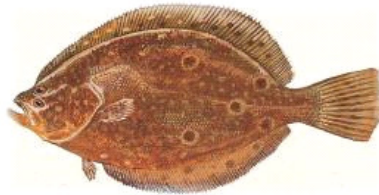


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**The Marine Sportfish Collection Project focuses on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program.**

**VMRC is working in cooperation with the VIMS to collect data on the harvest of recreational summer flounder. The goal of this project is to investigate the life history of male and female summer flounder within the recreational fishery along the Atlantic Coast.**

**Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal-sized (18.5 inches and above) and fresh-caught summer flounder to the Marine Sportfish Collection Project.**



**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a  
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING  
TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these merchants to participate and look for FLOUNDER ONLY  
collection kits within each project freezer:**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**

**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)**

**Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

**Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)**

**Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)**

**Rudee Inlet Station Marina (Virginia Beach)**



Updated July 13, 2010



# VIRGINIA SALTWATER Fisherman's Journal



## Get Hooked!

Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.

The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing

experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

Individual measurement of caught, and released, on the most highly prized fish, such as red drum, striped bass, and summer flounder, provides a greater benefit to everyone. This past year, data from volunteer angler surveys were an important component in the calculation to reduce size limits for summer flounder in Virginia. However, Virginia data from Virginia anglers have not yet reached the level needed to stand alone. If the ability to reduce the size limit occurs in the future, the catch-and-release information on undersized summer flounder would be of great benefit.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions, and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal" and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

# Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

◆ Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:

- Fish
- Birds
- Marine Mammals
- Boaters and swimmers

◆ Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!

◆ Contact the VMRC to sponsor additional bins your area



## VMRC Managed Locations\*

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton  
Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague  
Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles  
Don's Bait and Tackle, Wachapreague  
Lancaster County (multiple locations)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach  
Newport News (multiple locations)  
Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Hampton

\*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia

The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation and the Virginia Aquarium.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email [alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov).





## National Saltwater Angler Registry



**Under a new Federal law, most Virginia recreational saltwater fisherman must register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry.**

Registration is an important tool that will help NOAA and anglers work together to conserve our oceans and preserve our nation's rich tradition of saltwater fishing. Registering is **quick, easy and FREE** in 2010.

# New Law In 2010

## ATTENTION Virginia Saltwater Fishermen

**Before You Drop  
Your Line in the  
Water, Remember  
the Basics:**



**To learn more or to register**

**[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov)**

**1-888-MRIP-411**



**ARTICLE FOR MEDIA REFERENCE OR DIRECT PLACEMENT**  
**SOURCE: NOAA FISHERIES**

**NOAA CONTACT**  
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**VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES**  
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## **New Law: Most Virginia Saltwater Fishermen Need to Register with NOAA Before They Fish**

### *Virginia Registrations Lagging Behind Other States*

MRIP – According to the latest numbers from NOAA Fisheries, Virginia saltwater recreational fishermen appear to be lagging behind their peers in other states when it comes to complying with a new Federal law to help conserve our oceans and maintain vibrant, sustainable fisheries.

Under the law, most Virginia saltwater fishermen are required to register with the new National Saltwater Angler Registry before they go fishing this year.

As of January 1, 2010, Virginia fishermen need to register if they:

- Fish for or catch anadromous species in tidal waters; these are fish like striped bass, shad or river herring that live in the oceans but spawn in fresh water, OR
- Fish in the Federal waters more than three miles from the ocean shore or from the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, OR
- Don't meet any of the exceptions in the law.

Those exceptions include anglers who are under the age of 16; only fish on licensed charter, party or guide boats; hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; or hold and are fishing under a valid commercial license. In addition, out-of-state saltwater anglers who are already registered with NOAA do not need to re-register to fish in Virginia.

Fishermen are reminded that regardless of their registration status, it is important to learn and follow the rules where they are fishing. The registration requirement is in addition to, and has no bearing on, existing or future fishery management regulations such as size and bag limits, closed seasons and areas, *or saltwater fishing license purchase requirements*. For example, no person, whether or not registered by NOAA, is permitted to harvest or possess striped bass in the US EEZ.

Registration is quick and easy and will be free in 2010. Anglers simply need to log on to **[www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov)** and click on the Angler Registry link, or call the toll-free registration line at **1-888-MRIP411** (1-888-674-7411). Anglers will need to provide their name, date of birth, address and telephone number, and will receive a registration number that will allow them begin fishing immediately. After approximately 30 days, they will receive a registration card in the mail.

Virginia is lagging behind many other East Coast states in the number of anglers who have registered, as required. Over the six months the registry has been in effect so far, only 26,000 Virginia saltwater anglers have registered, compared to 75,000 in Maryland and 137,000 in New Jersey. In fact, the smallest state in the country, Rhode Island, has seen almost as many saltwater anglers register (23,000) as Virginia.

The registry is an important tool that will help fishermen and policy makers work together to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on ocean ecosystems and coastal economies. It is part of a national overhaul of the way NOAA collects and reports recreational fishing data. The goal of the initiative – known as the

Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP – is to provide the most accurate information possible that can be used to determine the health of fish stocks. Reliable, universally trusted data will in turn aid anglers, fisheries managers and other stakeholders in their combined efforts to effectively and fairly set the rules that will ensure the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.

For more information, visit [www.countmyfish.noaa.gov](http://www.countmyfish.noaa.gov).

In 2011, Virginia will implement its own free saltwater registration program, under a new state law that goes into effect July 1. The Virginia Fisherman Identification Program will collect the information necessary to exempt saltwater anglers from having to register annually with the federal government and pay any future federal registration charges. The free, annual state registration will be in place by Jan. 1, 2011.

